

In the Claims:

Please amend Claims 1-9, 11, 12, 15-17, 19 and 21 as follows:

~~Sub 21~~
1. (Amended) A storing apparatus in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a general access password and the password ; and

a password verifying unit for allowing access if the password is entered, and if the password is not entered, comparing the general access password with the password, allowing access if the general access password is the password, and denying access if the general access password is not the password.

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~~Sub 21~~
2. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein in the case where a same value has been preserved in the general access password and the password for access protection by said password preserving unit, even if there is no user input password input by the user, said password verifying unit permits an access by substituting said general access password for the user input password and comparing the general access password with the password for access protection.

3. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said password preserving unit further has a user input password area to store a user input password input by a user, and

said password verifying unit is constructed in a manner such that

at the start of the use of the apparatus such as turn-on of a power source, command reset, error reset, medium insertion, or the like, said general access password is read out and written into said user input password area, an access permission is established if the general password is the password, or an access inhibition is established if the general password is not the password, on the basis of a collation between the general access password in said user input password area and the password for access protection,

after said access permission or inhibition is established, each time there is a password input of the user, the user input password is written into said user input password area and, subsequently, the access permission inhibition is established on the basis of a collation between the user input password in said user input password area and the password for access protection.

4. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said password preserving unit further has a user input password area to store a user input password input by a user, and

said password verifying unit is constructed in a manner such that at the start of the use of the apparatus such as turn-on of a power source, command reset, error reset, medium insertion, or the like, the apparatus waits for the password input by the user in a state where said general access password is read out and written into said user input password area, when there is the user password input, the user input password is overwritten into the general access password in said user input password area, and after that, the password in said user input password area and said password for access protection are compared and the access protection is controlled, and

when there is no user password input and/or in the case where the password is an empty character train even if there is the user password input, the comparison between the general access password in said user input password area and the password for access protection is executed and the access protection is controlled.

5. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said password preserving unit preserves said general access password and said password for access protection into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body.

6. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said password preserving unit preserves said general access password and said password for access protection into said medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said general access password and said password for access protection from said medium and stores into an apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

7. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said password preserving unit preserves said general access password into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body and preserves said password for access protection into the medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said password for access protection from said medium and stores into the apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

8. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said password preserving unit preserves said password for access protection into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body and preserves said general access password into the medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said general access password from said medium and stores into the apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

9. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein in said medium, a password preserving area to preserve said password is provided in a specific area which cannot be accessed by an ordinary read command and write command.

11. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said medium is a medium fixedly enclosed in the apparatus main body.

12. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said medium is a removable medium which is detachable from the apparatus main body.

15. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a validity term setting unit for setting a validity term into said general access password.

16. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said validity term setting unit counts the number of using times of the apparatus by a counter and, when a value of said counter reaches a predetermined value, said validity term setting unit forcedly changes said general access password to a value different from the general access password so far.

17. (Amended) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said validity term setting unit sets a time of a validity term and, when a present time in case of using the

~~22~~ apparatus exceeds said validity term, said validity term setting unit forcedly changes said general access password to a value different from the general access password so far.

~~23~~ 19. (Amended) A method according to claim 18, wherein in the case where a same value has been preserved in said general access password and said password for access protection, in said password verifying step, prior to the password input of the user, a value of said general access password is copied to the user input password and is collated with said password for access protection, thereby permitting or inhibiting an access.

~~24~~ 21. (Amended) A method according to claim 18, further comprising a validity term setting step of setting a validity term into said general accesspassword.

REMARKS

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment, captioned "Version with markings to show changes made."

As a preliminary matter, applicants request acknowledgement of the references cited in a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement received on August 15, 2000. A copy of a PTO Form 1449 listing those references is enclosed.